monthly basis. The current reporting requirement imposed on Flls issuing PNs captures the notional value of the underlying Indian securities on which PNs have been issued. The format also reveals the names of the investors and their jurisdictions.

Merger of Banks

2936. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government propose to merge 19 Public Sector Banks to form 6-7 big banks of the size of SBI;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether such a decision will lead to retrenchment of staff; and

, (d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) to (d) Committee on Financial System (Narasimham Committee I) had, *inter-alia,* recommended a broad pattern of the structure of the banking system consisting of 3 or 4 large banks (including the State Bank of India) with international character and 8 to 10 national banks with a network of branches throughout the country engaged in 'universal' banking The Government has advised the banks that before considering any merger proposal, the Unions (of Banks) may be suitably sensitised on the need and advantages of consolidation and their apprehensions may be allayed. Further, while supporting any merger proposal, Government will ensure that the interests of the stakeholders and employees of merging banks are adequately protected. However, the Government is of the view that such a proposal needs to emanate from the concerned banks, themselves.

Vacant posts in Income Tax Department

†2937. SHRI AJAY MAROO: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a large number of posts under various categories are vacant in Income Tax Department;

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) if so, the reasons therefor and its effect of functioning of the Department; and

(c) the action being taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Department was allowed to fill up only 1/3rd of the total vacant posts as per DOP&T's instructions issued *vide* O.M. No. 2/8/2001-PIC dated 16.5.2001, which imposes abolition of 2/3rd of the total vacant posts on filling up direct recruitment vacancies. Due to the difficulties faced regarding manpower, the Department had approached the Government for exemption from the above-said O.M. As a result of this, 3300 posts have been allocated to the Department.

(c) Action for filling up of these 3300 posts as per rules has already been initiated.

Fraudulent practice of taking loans by Foreign Nationals

†2938. SHRI MOTILAL VORA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that some foreign nationals, after getting Indian citizenship fraudulently, are sending a large sum of money taken from banks as loans to foreign countries;

(b) whether such people are staying back in India even after the expiry of their visa; and

(c) whether it is not necessary for the foreigners coming from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Singapore to get visa?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) to (c) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House to the extent available.

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.